

2000 ALASKA TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

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In Cooperation with
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SUMMARY

There were 14,127 traffic accidents in Alaska during 2000, about four percent (3.9%) less than the previous year. Ninety-three accidents (0.66%) resulted in fatal injuries to occupants; nonfatal injuries were reported in 4181 (30%) of all accidents; and 9789 accidents (69%) caused only property damage. Traffic accidents injured or killed 6226 persons in Alaska during 2000 and caused \$52.3 million damage to vehicles plus \$2.1 million damage to highway structures and other non-vehicular property.

The Alaska fatality rate rose sharply to 2.30 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) during 2000, after an historic low of 1.58 in 1998 and 1.69 in 1999. The fatality rate within Alaska remains above the national rate of 1.52 fatalities per 100 million VMT.

One hundred and six of the 39,669 persons involved died as a result of their injuries (0.027% received fatal injuries). Seventy-nine were occupants of automobiles, trucks, or buses, and seven were motorcyclists. Ten pedestrians and four bicyclists were struck by motor vehicles and killed. One person riding an all terrain vehicle (AVT) and 5 snowmobile riders were killed in roadway accidents. Forty-six people died in accidents that were classed as alcohol or drug related and one fatality was attributed to a collision with a moose. Forty-five people might have survived had they been wearing seatbelts or using other safety equipment.

Eight percent (8.1%) of all accidents and 43.4% of fatalities were determined to be alcohol-related. There were 1145 alcohol-related accidents, 38 of which resulted in fatalities. Forty-six people died in traffic accidents in which at least one driver or involved nonmotorist was suspected or proven to be alcohol impaired by police. Alcohol-related fatalities included 34 occupants of standard vehicles (automobiles, trucks, or buses), two pedestrians, two bicyclists, four ATV/snowmobile riders, and four motorcyclists. 1111 drivers of automobiles, trucks, or buses were suspected or proven to be alcohol impaired by police; twenty-two of those impaired drivers sustained fatal injuries. Other alcohol impaired fatalities included one bicyclist, two pedestrians, four motorcycle riders and four riders on atv/snowmobiles. Seven passengers in vehicles driven by impaired drivers were killed. Five fatalities were occupants of vehicles struck by impaired drivers, and one bicyclist was struck and killed by an impaired driver.

Alcohol involvement in fatal crashes, based on police suspicion, blood alcohol tests, citations, and contributing factors, was similar to the previous year. The alcohol related fatality rate (number of persons killed in alcohol related crashes as a percent of total accident fatalities) was 43.4% in 2000 and 44% in 1999, after lows of 37% in 1997 and 40% in 1998.

Over 97% of the 25,707 vehicles involved were automobiles, trucks, or buses (91% were passenger cars and pick-ups). About 14.7% of all occupants in such vehicles received either nonfatal or fatal injuries. In contrast, motorcycles and recreational vehicles such as ATVs and snowmobiles comprised only 0.9%, bicycles only 0.7%, and pedestrians only 0.7% of all vehicles, but their occupants were far more likely to be hurt. Seventy-six percent (76.7%) of motorcyclists, 54.5% of recreational vehicle riders, 77.5% of bicyclists, and 86.5% of pedestrians were injured or killed.

The total number of accidents, as well as the percentage of accidents that involved either injuries or fatalities, continued to increase in three of the eight populous boroughs during 2000 (Matanuska-Susitna, Kodiak, and Kenai Peninsula Boroughs). Kenai Peninsula Borough, Kodiak Borough, and sparsely populated boroughs/areas had fatal crash rates well above the statewide rate of 0.66%

(Kenai 1.07%, Kodiak 4.43%, and sparsely populated boroughs 3.13%).

Fifty-nine percent of all crashes statewide and thirty percent of all fatal crashes occurred inside the boundaries of the Municipality of Anchorage. Forty-nine fatal accidents (52.7% of all fatal accidents) occurred in rural areas outside 21 city boundaries; seventeen also occurred outside organized borough boundaries. Thirty-nine percent of all accidents occurred in business and shopping areas. Fatal crashes were more likely to occur in family residential and agricultural or undeveloped areas. Thirty persons died in traffic accidents on six highways of the National Highway System in Alaska (Sterling Hwy, 4; Seward Hwy, 9; Glenn Hwy, 5; Parks Hwy, 6; Tok Cutoff, 1; and Richardson Hwy, 5 fatalities).

There were 660 vehicle collisions with moose in 2000. Nineteen percent resulted in minor or major injuries to occupants of motor vehicles and one person was killed. Over ninety percent (92.1%) of moose collisions statewide occurred in the Greater Anchorage (24.2%), Matanuska-Susitna (22.7%), Kenai (26.4%), and Fairbanks-Northstar (18.8%) Boroughs. Forty-two percent (279 of 660) of moose collision accidents were reported on major NHS routes (Sterling Hwy, 66; Seward Hwy, 33; Glenn Hwy, 70; Parks Hwy, 58; Richardson Hwy, 42; Alaska Hwy, 5; and Tok Hwy, 5). In 2000, moose collisions occurred most often during the months of January and February and between the hours of 6 p.m. and midnight. There were almost four times fewer collisions with moose during the months of April and May and between the hours of 10 a.m and 4 p.m. The only moose collision that resulted in a human fatality occurred during the month of August.

Unsafe speed, driver inattention, and failure to yield (in that order) were the most frequently cited contributing factors for all crashes during 2000. The top three human factors contributing to fatal accidents were unsafe speed, alcohol/drug use, and driver inattention. Almost thirty percent (29.5%) of human factors reported in fatal crashes indicated unsafe speed for road conditions or excessive speed/racing.

There are 12012 police reports and 2115 participant reports included in the 2000 analysis (85% and 15%). Almost 19,000 accident reports were received from Driver Services. Accident records not selected for inclusion included duplicate filings, accidents occurring on private property or off-roadway, and accidents otherwise not meeting criteria as discussed in the Traffic Accident Terminology section of this publication.